

1. I am the owner operator 44' sailing vessel engaged in blue water cruising and ocean passage making.
2. Primary weather sources at sea are USCG HF Radio Broadcasts, Inmarsat C and Navtext.
3. USCG voice forecasts are not normally used.
4. HF Weather fax is my primary weather information source and is received twice daily when at sea - the Weatherfax service is particularly good as it is one of the few providers of not only graphic wind /wave information but also large area synoptic charts from which one can gain a picture of the developing weather situation and thus plan and route long passages; particularly trans Atlantic in my case.
5. I do not use SITOR.
6. Should the HF broadcast cease I would be forced to consider a capital investment of several thousand dollars on satellite communication equipment and then subscribe to a weather providing service at additional cost and furthermore have to pay a 'By the second' rate everytime the service was used. The very fact that the HF service is free enables the user to receive timely and regular updates rather than be selective owing to user cost. This has to be a significant contribution to safety at sea. The information available commercially is no better than that currently available from the USCG as it probably users the same sources. The downside however is that a third party has interpreted the synoptic information to provide a forecast rather than the end user being provided with the raw data from which he can draw his or her own conclusions as is the situation at present.
7. The loss of the HF Weatherfax would make a marked impact on my weather information sources for. Without a major capital investment that I can ill afford, I would be left with selective area text forecast from which a big picture can not be built.
8. Area of operation - Atlantic and Mediterranean waters, Northern hemisphere, 90°W to 30°E.

I include below a letter sent by myself to a leading yachting Magazine.

Dear Sir

WEATHERFAX VIA HF RADIO

The US Coast Guard is considering withdrawing the HF/SSB weatherfax service and are seeking comment from existing users.
<http://dmses.dot.gov/docimages/p101/466958.pgf> refers.

Whilst any reduction in the number of weather sources and methods of obtaining weather information at sea can only be detrimental to safety, the Weatherfax service is particularly good as it is one of the few providers of not only graphic wind /wave information but also large area synoptic charts from which one can gain a picture of the developing situation and plan long passages. The Weatherfax system is also free, something that is close to the heart of many blue water cruisers!

There is a larger issue at stake here. It is not until one starts blue water cruising that one realises the benefit of the SSB. It not just a reliable and excellent source of weather information, as anyone who has listened to Herb at Southbound II or Chris Parker in the Caribbean would agree, but also a valuable

safety tool for yachts passage-making in company yet outside mutual VHF range . There are also the numerous safety and social 'chat nets' that enable cruisers to keep in touch and provide a wealth of other general cruising information.

Weather and safety information is of course available by other means and in a few years time, no doubt, those offshore will be surfing the internet via a satellite for a fraction of what it costs today. In the meantime however the SSB remains one of the most important bits of kit on a cruising boat; a fact that is borne out annually by Yachting World's ARC review. It concerns me therefore that the loss of the weatherfax service may cause boat owners to overlook SSB and opt for the Sat Phone/Sat Comms approach, a decision that they may come to regret.

May I therefore ask you to draw this situation to your readers attention and urge them to contact the USCG at <http://dms.dot.gov> quoting docket USCG-2007-27656 supporting the Weatherfax service.

Yours faithfully